

## CHAPTER 4

### REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INCIDENT COMMANDS

In situations where there is a need for senior executive-level response coordination, command and control of an incident may include the use of a Regional or National Incident Command (RIC/NIC). The purpose of a RIC/NIC organization is to oversee the overall management of the incident(s), focusing primarily on strategic assistance and direction and resolving competition for scarce response resources. This organization does not supplant the IC(s), but supports and provides strategic direction. Execution of tactical operations and coordination remains the responsibility of the IC(s)/UC(s).

**Regional Incident Command** - A RIC is an organization activated by the District Commander to ensure coordination for Command, Planning, and Logistical matters. The need for a RIC may arise when there are multiple on-scene ICs, multiple Coast Guard ICs and/or when there is heavy demand for Coast Guard resources from other agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The RIC will determine which critical resources are sent to which incident and determine priorities for their assignment.

**National Incident Command** - A NIC is an organization that is functionally similar to the RIC and is used if the incident requires the direct involvement of the most senior Coast Guard Operational Commander(s).

## **DETERMINATION TO ACTIVATE A REGIONAL OR NATIONAL INCIDENT COMMAND**

A District Commander, Area Commander, or the Commandant can determine when an incident(s) is of such magnitude, complexity, or operational intensity that it would benefit from the activation of a RIC/NIC. Factors to consider when deciding to activate a RIC or NIC include, but are not limited to;

- Complex incident overwhelming local and regional Coast Guard assets;
- Overlapping Coast Guard districts;
- An incident that crosses international borders;
- The existence of, or the potential for, a high level of national political and media interest; or,
- Significant threat or impact to the public health and welfare, natural environment, property, or economy over a broad geographic area.

When the decision is made to activate a RIC/NIC, the following actions should occur:

- The District Commander will activate a RIC or, the Area Commander or the Commandant may designate a NIC.
- A deputy RIC/NIC will be designated with clear succession of command authority.
- If an incident(s) is multi-jurisdictional, the RIC/NIC shall establish a Regional or National UC. Regional or National UC representatives will typically consist of executives possessing the highest level of response authority as possible. For efficiency of decision- making within the UC, the RIC/NIC shall determine the proper make-up and number of representatives.

Note: There may be incidents where it is beneficial to activate a RIC or NIC, but the Coast Guard is not the lead response agency. In these cases, the RIC/NIC will coordinate with the lead agency's response organization and, if agreed upon, form a UC.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RIC/NIC**

When the Coast Guard is the lead federal agency with primary response authority, the RIC/NIC will have responsibility for overall strategic management of the incident and will:

- Set the overall incident objectives;
- Establish overall incident priorities;
- Allocate critical resources based on overall incident priorities;
- Ensure that the incident is properly managed;
- Ensure that the on-scene incident objectives are met and shall provide support to minimize conflict with supporting agency's priorities;
- Communicate, at the commensurate level, with affected parties, stakeholders, and the public; and
- Coordinate acquisition of off-incident, unassigned resources. This could include federal, state, local, and international resources as appropriate. This coordination may involve other federal agencies and the Governor(s) of the affected state(s).

When the Coast Guard is an assisting agency operating under the Federal Response Plan (FRP), the RIC/NIC will have the responsibility for overall strategic

management of Coast Guard assets in support of the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO). In this case, the RIC/NIC will:

- Balance and allocate critical resources based on FEMA set priorities;
- Ensure that the Coast Guard's participation and support is properly managed;
- Ensure that FCO objectives are met with minimal disruption to Coast Guard statutory responsibilities;
- In concert with the FCO and the Regional Emergency Transportation Coordinator (RETCO), communicate with affected parties, stakeholders, and the public; and
- Facilitate the coordination and support of local and state resources, as appropriate.

The RIC/NIC organization should always be kept as small as possible. The minimum organization will consist of the Regional/National Incident Commander and a deputy. As necessary, these other positions should be staffed:

- Assistant RIC/NIC, Logistics
- Assistant RIC/NIC, Planning
- Assistant RIC/NIC, Finance/Administration
- RIC/NIC Critical Resources Unit Leader (RUL)
- RIC/NIC Situation Unit Leader (SUL)
- RIC/NIC Information Officer (IO)
- RIC/NIC Liaison Officer (LO)
- RIC/NIC Law Specialist

**The Regional/National Incident Command does not, in any way, replace the on-scene incident ICS organizations or functions.** The above positions, if established, are strictly related to the RIC/NIC. Tactical operations continue to be directed at the on-scene IC/UC level.

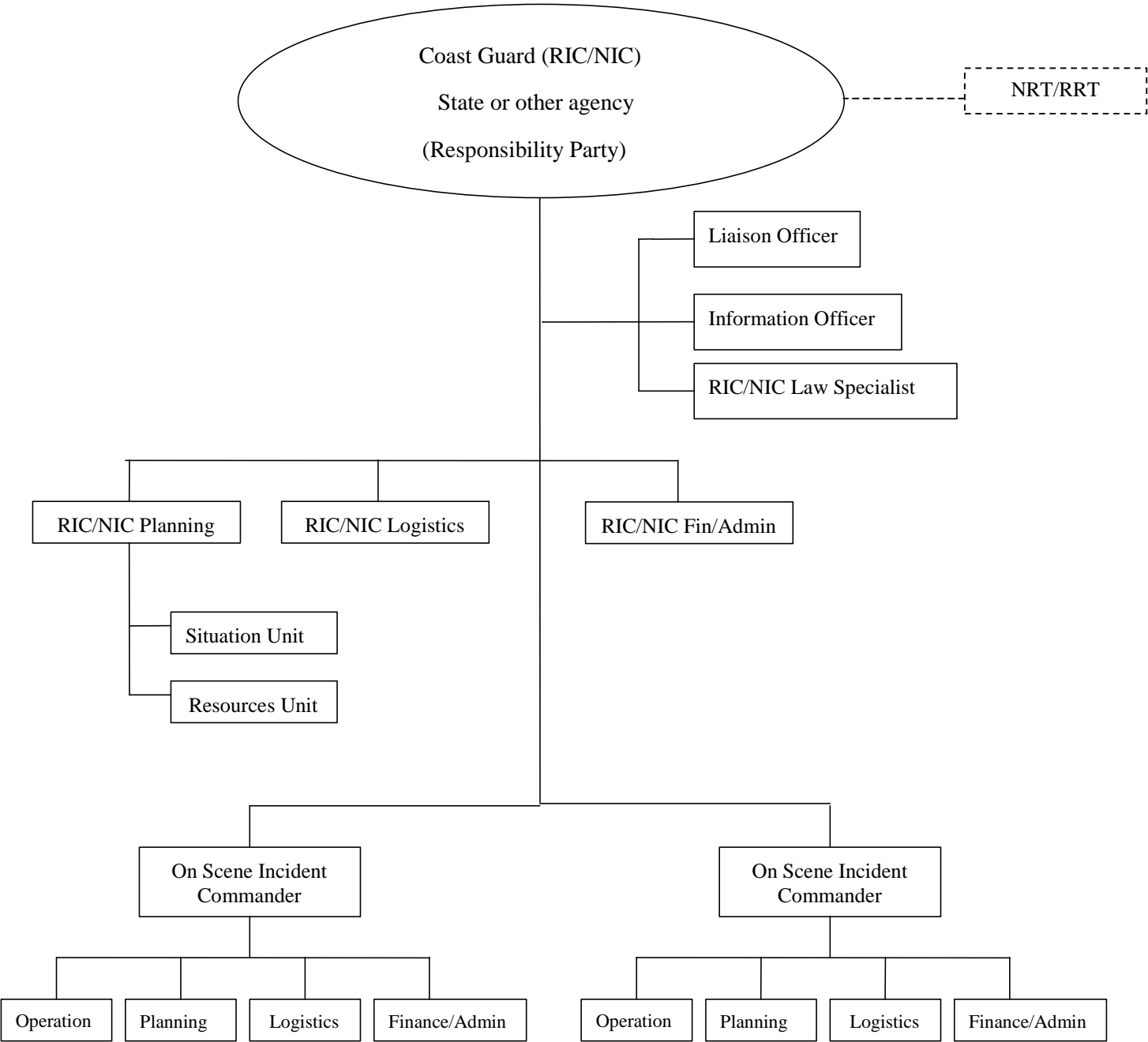
## **RIC/NIC REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS**

It is envisioned that the role of Regional Incident Commander or National Incident Commander will be filled by a Flag Officer (or their designee) with the ability to set priorities and objectives on behalf of the entire Coast Guard. When established, the RIC reports through the District and Area Commanders to the Commandant. When a National Incident Command is established, the designated NIC will normally be the Area Commander. When the NIC is not the Area Commander, the NIC will report directly to the Area Commander in whose Area Of Responsibility (AOR) the incident occurred. Maintenance and Logistics Command (MLC) Commanders shall support the RIC/NIC organization as directed by the Area Commander.

In the rare instance where the Commandant designates a National Incident Commander at Headquarters to manage an event that impacts the entire Coast Guard (for example: Y2K or a nationwide electronics systems failure), the NIC reports directly to the Commandant while maintaining close liaison with the Area Commanders.

# REGIONAL INCIDENT COMMAND/NATIONAL INCIDENT COMMAND ORGANIZATION

An organization chart showing the basic RIC/NIC is:



Note: NIIMS Area Command includes an Aviation Coordinator position. This position was intentionally left out. The RIC/NIC can add the position anytime they determine a need for special aviation coordination.

## **REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INCIDENT COMMAND POSITION CHECKLISTS**

### **REGIONAL/NATIONAL COMMANDER (Single – Unified RIC/NIC Command)**

The RIC/NIC Commander is responsible for providing the overall direction to the on-scene IC(s). This responsibility includes ensuring that conflicts are resolved, incident objectives are established and strategies are selected for the use of critical resources.

The RIC/NIC has the responsibility of coordinating with the Regional and National UC, as follows:

1. Provide briefings to the Commandant (and Area Commander if applicable), and obtain feedback regarding Coast Guard expectations, concerns, and constraints.
2. If operating within a UC, develop a working agreement with all participants to employ the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) ICS as the response management system (If possible, this should be worked out well in advance).
3. Assess the incident potential and ensure the RIC/NIC infrastructure is capable of meeting response objectives.
4. Set the stage for accomplishment of best response, by providing clear understanding of Coast Guard expectations, intentions, and constraints.

5. Provide overall direction and strategic and overarching logistical management of the incident(s), including setting of overall objectives.
6. Ensure that the response addresses the priorities and direction set by the RIC/NIC.
7. Establish priorities for assignment and demobilization of critical resources.
8. Assign and approve demobilization of critical resources.
9. Establish/approve policy for release of information to the media, the public, etc.
10. Serve as public spokesperson for the overall crisis response.
11. Manage staff to ensure the ICs are supported.

#### **DEPUTY REGIONAL/NATIONAL COMMANDER**

1. Assist the RIC/NIC in executing his/her responsibilities.
2. Provide incident-specific subject matter expertise to the RIC/NIC.
3. Oversee and facilitate the overall operation of the RIC/NIC staff on behalf of the RIC/NIC.

#### **RIC/NIC LIAISON OFFICER (LO)**

1. Establish liaison, as needed, with representatives of assisting and cooperating agencies. This will often be with the same agencies represented at the IC level, but will typically be a link to a more senior organizational level than that represented on-scene.



2. Establish liaison, as needed, with stakeholders: environmental, economic, and political. There may be some stakeholders that, because of their wide area influence, organization, and interest, will desire representation at both the IC level and at the RIC/NIC level. It is expected, however, that the majority of stakeholder service and support will be handled at the IC level.
3. Monitor and support as requested, the IC's LO(s) efforts to establish strong ties to assisting/cooperating agencies and stakeholders.
4. Oil and HAZMAT spills: as necessary, work with the National Response Team (NRT)/Regional Response Team (RRT) to identify and resolve issues and concerns. Keep the NRT/RRT informed of incident status and seek their support.
5. Monitor and measure stakeholders' and assisting and cooperating agencies' perception of the effectiveness of the response and keep the RIC/NIC and staff advised.
6. Liaise with all investigating agencies, supporting their activities so as to provide for best possible progress without interference with the incident response. Coordinate site visits with the IC(s). As much as possible, the RIC/NIC will deal with all investigating agencies in an effort to reduce/minimize impact on the ICs.

### **RIC/NIC INFORMATION OFFICER (IO)**

1. Provide rapid and accurate information on the incident to the media and other interested parties. Normally, detailed information regarding response specifics will be referred to and

handled by the appropriate IC's IO. The RIC/NIC IO will generally provide information on overall progress and status of the response from a regional or national perspective.

2. Identify and communicate to RIC/NIC staff the RIC/NIC policy and procedures for release of information.
3. If appropriate, establish the RIC/NIC Joint Information Center (JIC), as directed by the RIC/NIC.
4. Coordinate with the IC's IO(s) to obtain information and to ensure consistency.
5. Observe and support as requested, the IC's IO(s) efforts to establish strong and effective public information services.
6. Monitor and measure public and media perception of response effectiveness and keep the RIC/NIC and staff advised.
7. Schedule and keep the RIC/NIC and staff informed of news releases, press conferences, town meetings, etc., to be conducted at the RIC/NIC level.
8. Prepare material and coordinate the conduct of press conferences, town meetings, etc. Provide speaker preparation and coaching to members of the RIC/NIC staff.
9. Carry out the protocol function for visiting dignitaries, including coordination and conduct of briefs and site visits. As much as possible, the RIC/NIC will deal with all VIPs in an effort to reduce staff load at the IC(s) level.

### **RIC/NIC LAW SPECIALIST**

1. Advise the RIC/NIC on legal issues.
2. Establish links with the Responsible Party (RP), state, and other applicable legal representatives.

This is primarily a responsibility during Spills of National Significance (SONS).

## **ASSISTANT RIC/NIC, PLANNING**

The Assistant RIC/NIC, Planning is responsible for collecting information from incident management teams in order to assess and evaluate potential conflicts in establishing incident objectives, strategies, and the priority of critical resources, as follows:

1. Under the direction of the RIC/NIC, facilitate/conduct RIC/NIC staff meetings. Be the process facilitator
2. Review for consistency, the IC(s) Incident Action Plans (IAP). Ensure that the IC(s) are adequately and appropriately anticipating and preparing for future response needs as well as the next operational period. Brief IAP(s) to RIC/NIC and staff.
3. In consultation with the Assistant RIC/NIC for Logistics, the Resources Unit Leader (RUL) (if assigned), and the Situation Unit Leader (SUL), recommend to RIC/NIC the incident priorities.
4. In consultation with the Logistics, Resources Unit (if assigned) and Situation Unit Leaders, recommend to the RIC/NIC the assignment and demobilization of critical resources.
5. Prepare and distribute the RIC/NIC policies, procedures and decisions to the RIC/NIC staff and the on-scene ICs. Maintain a record of all these documents.
6. Develop/assemble the National/Regional Incident Command Operating Guide (RIC/NIC OG). The RIC/NIC OG should include the following:
  - a. RIC/NIC Overall Incident Objectives.

- b. Critical Resources (Critical Resources are any piece of equipment or personnel with technical or subject matter expertise, or other capabilities requested by the IC(s) that are in high demand or short supply and essential for the proper execution of tactical actions at the incident as applicable).
  - c. Incident Priorities (as applicable to critical resources).
  - d. RIC/NIC Staff Organization Chart, showing names and assigned positions of all participants.
  - e. RIC/NIC Staff Meeting and Briefing Schedule; including the schedule for phone calls and the meeting of the RIC/NIC with the IC(s).
  - f. RIC/NIC Communication Plan should identify how the RIC/NIC staff is able to communicate with the IC(s) and others.
  - g. RIC/NIC Information Plan
  - h. Unusual situation and emergency procedure reporting
  - i. 24-hour watch procedures
  - j. As needed, RIC/NIC policy, procedures and decisions
7. Develop briefing paper(s) on incident specific issues and concerns. Issues and concerns are matters raised in the course of the response that the RIC/NIC desires to have researched or discussed as an aid to fully understanding the issue. Issues will be summarized in a briefing paper (ideally less than one page; no more than two pages) and included in the RIC/NIC OG for the information of RIC/NIC Staff and IC(s).

## **RIC/NIC SITUATION UNIT LEADER (SUL)**

1. Develop and implement procedures for establishing and maintaining current, the “common operational picture” for the RIC/NIC and staff. This includes proactive intelligence gathering from all RIC/NIC staff elements and the IC(s) SULs.
2. Maintain current situation status displays.
3. Prepare incident situation information for support of, and use in, briefing documents and presentations.
4. Support/assist the Assistant RIC/NIC, Planning, with developing recommendations for establishing priorities and assigning/demobilizing critical resources.
5. As required by RIC/NIC, provide frequent/timely incident status updates to Coast Guard Headquarters, the parent Coast Guard District, and other agencies and entities.

## **RIC/NIC RESOURCES UNIT LEADER (RUL)**

1. Maintain resource status for all critical resources. This will require regular contact with on-scene RULs to ensure that resource status is current. Also, track RIC/NIC Staff and resources that directly support the staff.
2. Support/assist the Assistant RIC/NIC, Planning in developing recommendations for establishing priorities and for assigning and demobilizing critical resources.
3. Working with the ICs, submit critical resource needs to the Assistant RIC/NIC, Logistics.
4. Coordinate with the Assistant RIC/NIC, Finance/Administration, to track overhead/costs for RIC/NIC and provide to the Assistant RIC/NIC, Finance/Administration.

## **ASSISTANT RIC/NIC, LOGISTICS**

The Assistant RIC/NIC, Logistics, is responsible for providing facilities, services, and materials at the RIC/NIC Command level and for ensuring effective use of critical resources and supplies among the incident management teams, as follows:

1. Provide facilities, services, communications capabilities and administrative supplies for the RIC/NIC organization.
2. Obtain specialists and RIC/NIC staff support, as requested.
3. Establish liaison with IC(s) Logistics Section(s) so as to identify critical resources.
4. Support/assist the Assistant RIC/NIC, Planning, in developing recommendations for establishing priorities to govern the assignment of critical resources and to develop recommended assignment/demobilization of critical resources.
5. As necessary, provide for identification and acquisition of national level response resources needed by the IC(s). Track critical resources from time ordered to check-in.
6. When directed by the RIC/NIC, take charge of expanded supply network to support the IC(s).
7. Develop the RIC/NIC Communication Plan (should identify how the RIC/NIC staff is able to communicate with the IC(s) and others).
8. Track national/international resources until they arrive at the scene and are turned over to the cognizant incident RUL.
9. Coordinate directly with the Assistant RIC/NIC, Finance/Administration, for procurement and accounting purposes.

## **ASSISTANT RIC/NIC, FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION**

1. Track and document total response costs.
2. Ensure that response costs are managed within the established financial ceilings and guidelines. Coordinate ceiling adjustments.
3. For oil and hazardous materials incidents: keep the RIC/NIC advised as to the impact on the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (OSLTF) or CERCLA Fund and potential/projected time for reaching liability limits of the RP.
4. For oil spills only: Establish a Pollution Removal Funding Authorization (PRFA) or other interagency agreements and ensure compliance with all cost documentation requirements of interagency fiscal agreements.
5. For oil spills: Coordinate the overall processing of claims with the RP and IC(s).